

BUILDING BETTER BUSINESSES IN SOUTH AFRICA

25 November 2023

Dear Friends:

“Overcoming poverty is not a gesture of charity. It is an act of justice. It is the protection of a fundamental human right, the right to dignity and a decent life. While poverty persists, there is no true freedom.”

—Nelson Mandela

This past year has been one of initiating new partnerships, and continuing to overcome the effects of the pandemic. Here is an update as 2023 comes to a close.

Building Better Businesses

The Building Better Businesses Symposium was a cornerstone of our business training partnership with Rotary from 2018 until 2022. After the fourth Symposium, held on 5 + 6 May 2022, we were introduced to Rotarian Shawn Theunissen, Founder and CEO of Property Point and President of the Johannesburg Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Shawn had developed a program of entrepreneurial outreach in townships through in-person meetings and listening centers throughout South Africa. Last year we banded together with Shawn and his Head of Operations, Desigan Chetty, to support their outreach in Kagiso Township near Johannesburg. The initial phase of that partnership is described below under Kagiso Female Plumbers. We anticipate that the business training opportunities of the Symposium will also continue and expand with this group.

ARCoM – African Rotary Community Mediation

“Without peace, we cannot build prosperity.” —Nelson Mandela

On 25 March 2023, 66 individuals graduated from the ARCoM program conducted in partnership with Mediators Beyond Borders International. Several Canadian Rotarians and directors of The Townships Project attended the graduation in South Africa virtually. In October 2023, an application was made to Rotary International to form a Peace Building and Conflict Prevention group to continue this work in Africa and internationally. The Townships Project has completed its financial commitment to this program, but is gratified that support for this initiative is being widely taken up in Rotary.

Early Childhood Development (ECD) Business Training

“The true character of a society is revealed in how it treats its children.” —Nelson Mandela



On 8 July 2023, 35 individual business owners received government-recognized Level 5 Business Training Certificates. These individuals collectively have 1275 children registered in their centers, spread across four age groups: infants to 18 months, toddlers to age 3, pre-kindergarten to age 4 and kindergarten to age 5. The streamed graduation ceremony was attended by some Rotarians and directors of The Townships Project in Ontario and Prince Edward Island. A second 2023 ECD Business Training Program, with 15 individual business owners, began in October, and will be completed in early December, 2023. Graduates of these training programs, which are held at Covenant Garden Estate in the Township of Mathibestat, are encouraged by Executive Director Grace Matlou to meet once a month “to work together to help the children in their care grow physically, spiritually and mentally in a healthy way”. These meetings also provide social workers with the Department of Social Development an opportunity to clarify any issues that may arise in the community.

Leadership Transition in our Rotary Partnership

“A winner is a dreamer who never gives up.” —Nelson Mandela

Two years ago, in the middle of the pandemic, we set up *Rotary Townships Project NPC*, a non-profit corporation on the understanding that it would simplify the coordination of our South African projects. During the course of 2023, as we supported three different projects with three different sets of Rotarian volunteers, it became evident that this plan was in fact more expensive and cumbersome than necessary. So, we handed over the *Rotary Townships Project NPC* to Rotarian Aloysie Benite, who is using it to provide business training and investment support to South African immigrants from other African countries. It will still largely focus on providing support to female townships entrepreneurs, but it will be separately funded and managed. We will continue managing our three projects, and any others we take on in the future, with Rotarian volunteers for each specific project through their own local Rotary Club or other registered non-profit.

Nokwanda Mchunu and Pink Print Butchery

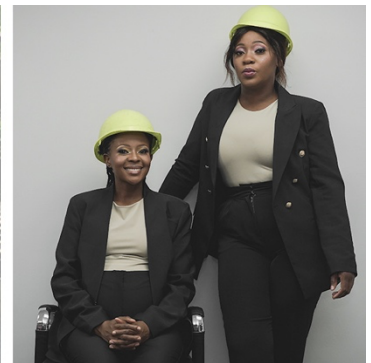
Nokwanda runs a butchery in KwaZulu Natal that won first prize at our 2021 Building Better Businesses Symposium. At the time she had 8 full-time employees. In April 2022, her business suffered catastrophic flooding and she has



been trying to recover ever since. By contracting out a lot of the butchery labour, she was able to keep the business afloat, but had to lay off 5 staff and cut back hours for the other 3. During 2023, The Townships Project contributed a portion of the recovery costs so that she can get the business back to full staffing on a profitable footing.

Kagiso Female Plumbers

Through our partnership with Property Point, we are part of a 2-year entrepreneurship training program in Kagiso Township near Johannesburg, for 5 plumbers, 5 mechanics and 5 electricians. We are supporting Zamava Construction owned by Lwazi Lutya (33) and Thozama Gomba (30). We are told by our partners that our financial involvement encourages the participation of other local businesses.



Martha to visit South Africa

Martha last visited South Africa in 2019. Since then, the pandemic turned our existing programs upside down, triggering many changes in how we work both with Rotary and with individual entrepreneurs. She will visit again in 2024 to meet with Rotarians and clients we have been supporting, to assess face to face how we might best proceed. We anticipate continuing to link Rotary Clubs in Canada and South Africa with specific projects as this has proven an effective way of funding and keeping track of each program. We look forward to posting update reports on the 2023 projects we funded including ECD Business Training, Pink Print Butchery and Kagiso Female Plumbers on our website in the new year.

THANK YOU!

Without your support, none of this would have happened.

We hope that you will continue to change the lives of vulnerable entrepreneurs based in townships across South Africa. You can **donate securely by eTransfer/Interac** through your bank or credit union to **donations@thetownshipsproject.org**. You can also donate by mail, using the enclosed envelope with insert. All donations over \$20 will receive a charitable tax receipt.

Our best wishes for a safe, happy and fulfilling holiday season and New Year.

Sincerely,

F. Martha Deacon
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